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Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 IO-13 ORM-02 SS-15
SP-02 INR-07 INRE-00 PRS-01 /049 W
----------241733Z 081549 /43
O R 241631Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9720
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2259

FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATOR DERIAN AND ARA/ECA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, AR, OVIP (DERINA, PATRICIA)
SUBJECT: PRESS TREATMENT OF DERIAN VISIT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2195

1. MARCH 23 EMBOFFS CALLED AT FONMINISTRY ON DEPUTY CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, HEAD OF NORTH AMERICAN SECTION, AND DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP TO DISCUSS DERIAN VISIT AND PROPOSED CALLS AT THE FORNMINISTRY. FORNOFFICE OFFICIALS AGREED TO WED MORNING SCHEDULE SET FORTH IN REFTEL, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT IN A POSITION TO ASSURE THAT AN APPOINTMENT WITH FORNMINISTER HIMSELF WOULD BE POSSIBLE. IF NOT, THEY FELT CONFIDENT THAT APPOINTMENT WITH UNDER SECRETARY ALLARE COULD BE ARRANGED.

2. DURING CONVERSATION IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS WERE VERY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT DERIAN VISIT, PARTICULARLY THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PRESS, EITHER DOMESTIC OR US, MIGHT CHARACTERIZE HER VISIT AS AN INVESTIGATION OF ARGENTINE DOMESTIC SITUATION. EMBOFFS POINTED TO SATISFACTORY BRAY VISIT IN DECEMBER
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AND EXPRESSED HOPE DERIAN VISIT WOULD FOLLOW SAME PATTERN. HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATOR ARLIA INSISTED THAT SITUATION HAD CHANGED MARKEDLY SINCE BRAY VISIT; SECRETARY OF STATE HAD MADE PUBLIC STATEMENT ACCUSING GOA OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND USG HAD IMPOSED SANCTIONS ON GOA. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, TO HAVE A HIGH USG OFFICIAL WHOSE TITLE IS COORDINATOR OF

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HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT ARGENTINA WOULD ALMOST INEVITABLY
LEAD PRESS TO CONCLUDE THAT AN INVESTIGATION WAS UNDER WAY.
ARLIA SAID THAT THIS SITUATION PRESENTED GOA WITH
A SIFNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL RISK.

3. ARLIA ASKED IF USG WAS PREPARED TO GUARANTEE
THAT DEPARTMENT OF STATE WOULD ISSUE A STATEMENT OF
CORRECTION IF PRESS CHARACTERIZED DERIAN VISIT
AS AN INSPECTION.

4. EMBOFFS RSPONDED THAT IT WAS CLEAR UNDERSTANDING
THAT DERIAN VISIT WAS ONE OF FAMILIARIZATION, THAT
SHE WOULD BE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITY TO
GAIN INSIGHT INTO SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. EMBOFFS
BELIEVED THAT SHE WOULD NOT BE AT ALL RELUCTANT TO
DENY INVESTIGATIVE ROLE TO PRESS IF SITUATION
SO REQUIRED. EMBOFFS STATED THAT TACTICS ON
DEALING WITH PRESS WERE RESPONSIBILITY OF DEPARMTNET'S
PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION WHICH USES TACTICS IT
DETERMINES MOST APPROPRATE FOR SITUATION. WE
COULD NOT GUARANTEE A DEPARTMENTAL DENIAL ON
MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS, BUT WE WERE CONFIDENT THAT FROM
CONCERN SHOWN IN DEPARTMENT'S MESSAGES ON THIS VISIT THAT
PRECIPITATION OF EMBARRASSING INCIDENT FOR GOA WAS FURTHEST
THING FROM MS DERIAN'S MIND. WE STATED THAT DEPARTMENT
AND EMBASSY FULLY SHARED GOA CONCERN AND WE INTENDED
TO MAKE ALL APPROPRIATE EFFORTS TO PREVENT VISIT FROM
BEING CHARACTERIZED AS AN INVESTIGATION. EMBOFFS
WERE UNAWRARE THAT FONOFFICE HAD JUST BEFORE OUR
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MEETING ISSUED STATEMENT REJECTING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
REPORT. THIS EVENT UNDOUBTEDLY ENHANCED FONOFFICE
SENSITIVITY.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CONCER EXPRESSED BY THE
MINISTRY OFFICIALS OVER THE POSSIBLE PRESS TREATMENT
OF THE VISIT IS A LEGITIMATE ONE. WE SUGGEST THAT
BEST COURSE OF ACTION TO FORESTALL POSSIBLE MISLEADING
REPORTING ON VISIT WOULD BE A BRIEF DEPARTMENTAL
STATEMENT ANNOUNCING MS DERIAN'S TRIP WHICH WOULD
INCLUDE MENTION OF HER STOP IN BRAZIL AND THAT
SHE ALSO INTENDED TO CONSULT WITH THE US AMBASSADOR
IN URUGUAY. IF SUCH A STATEMENT IS NOT FEASIBLE,
EMBASSY URGES THAT AS A MINIMUM DEPT BE PREPARED TO
ISSUE APPROPRIATE CLARIFICATION OF NATURE OF
DERIAN VISIT SHOULD CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE IT.
FYI: NYTIMES CORRESPONDENT JUAN DE ONIS WAS AWARE
THIS MORNING OF DERIAN VISIT AND PLANS TO DELAY A
SCHEDULED TRIP TO COVER IT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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